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MEDICAL LITERATURE OF KENTUCKY

By LUNSFORD P. VANDELL, M. D.



READ BEFORE THE KENTUCKY STATE MEDICAL SOCIETY, 1874

LOUISVILLE:

PRINTED BY JOHN P. MORTON AND COMPANY.

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I have undertaken, in compliance with the instructions of the Medical Society of Kentucky, to write a history of the medical literature of the state, and have the honor to submit the following report as the result of my labors. The report embraces a period of seventy-five years, and refers to the productions of more than two hundred Kentucky physicians who have written on medicine. It is consequently long, and, if deemed by the Society worthy of publication, must extend through at least two volumes of its Transactions.

In preparing the report two plans occurred to my mind—one to present a continuous history of the various publications that have appeared in chronological order; the other to take up the several authors in the order of their appearance, and then, having introduced them, to follow each down to the present time, or to the close of his career. The latter has been adopted as having, upon the whole, most advantages; and this notably, among others, that in connection with every author named in the report will be seen at a single view a list of all his writings.

The history which I here present, besides notices of the Medical Literature of Kentucky, embraces some account of the origin of her Medical Schools, with biographical sketches of a number of her most distinguished medical men. In collecting the materials for it my chief reliance has been upon the medical journals of our country, and all these have been examined in which it was thought any thing was likely to be found from the pens of Kentucky physicians. The Transactions of our Society from the beginning and those of the American Medical Association have also been consulted. I have sought, in addition, to gather up all the introductory lectures delivered in our medical schools, and all the more ephemeral publications not contained in the journals

of medicine. The reports of our hospitals, lunatic asylums, and institutions for the blind and for deaf-mutes have also been referred to; the larger and more elaborate works on medicine have received due attention; and in addition to all I have had recourse to other than medical books for some facts that bear upon the history of Kentucky medicine. But with all my efforts to make the report complete I can hardly hope that many omissions will not be found in it which more time and greater care might have prevented; and still less reason have I to expect that my readers, however courteous, will concur in all the judgments expressed concerning our medical writers and their works. On the latter point I claim only to have formed these judgments candidly, and without any feeling, of which I am conscious, that would tempt me to do injustice to any one. Almost all that relates to the medical schools of Kentucky I have written from my own recollection, and venture to hope that my account of them will be found free from prejudice. Whatever were the controversies in which I bore a part while connected with those institutions, the time since has been sufficient to allay all the animosities that were enkindled by them.

On an impartial review of the labors of Kentucky physicians and surgeons, and a candid comparison of her medical literature with that of her sister states, I believe it will be admitted that a work has been performed by her medical profession of which she may well feel proud. Her great physicians and surgeons lose nothing by comparison with the statesmen, orators, and soldiers who have conferred luster upon her name. A near neighbor of the Sage of Ashland, his medical counselor and intimate friend, lived the most successful lithotomist of his times. With the Hero of Buena Vista grew up to manhood in the backwoods of Kentucky another surgeon, to whose boldness and skill the world is indebted for ovariectomy, an operation which has already added years to the average duration of life in women. The most original and elaborate treatise on medicine by an American physician is from the pen of a writer who was reared in Kentucky, and while engaged in its preparation was a teacher in one of her medical schools. One of the most comprehensive systems of surgery in our language was written by a former teacher in the same school. And the work on practice, which stands at the head of American medical books, is made up, in part, of materials collected by the author while a teacher of medicine in Kentucky.

Medical men appear to have been among the first adventurers to Kentucky, and to have taken a leading part in the earliest events in her history. Indeed her annals show that the first white man who set foot upon her soil was a physician. Dr. Thomas Walker, of Virginia, ventured into the mountains on her eastern border as early as 1745, according to some accounts, and certainly as early as 1750, several years in advance of Daniel Boone. He took an active part in framing the treaties by which the Indian tribes ceded their lands to Virginia. In the London edition of Washington's Journal, printed in 1754, there is a map marked "Walker's Settlement, 1750," on the Cumberland, showing that he had thus early become acquainted with the country. In 1780 he engaged with Col. Henderson in running the boundary-line between Virginia and North Carolina, or the territory which now forms Kentucky and Tennessee, as far west as the Mississippi, but was not successful in the undertaking.*

Some years later came another physician to Kentucky whose name is prominent in the early transactions of the state. This was Dr. John Connolly, of Pittsburgh, an intrepid, enterprising man, of decided talents, but with a mind more turned to military affairs and land speculations than to medicine. He is mentioned in the Journal of Washington, already referred to, as acquainted with the country on the Ohio in 1770. He had then conceived the project of forming a province to extend from the Ohio River to the Cumberland, and embracing a large portion of the state. In 1773 Captain Thomas Bullitt, as his agent, surveyed and patented the ground on which Louisville is built, and in April following advertised the land for sale. During the latter year he was dispatched by Lord Dunmore with a captain's commission to take possession of Pittsburgh and the adjacent country in the name of the king of England. He issued a proclamation accordingly, calling upon the male citizens to be embodied in the militia for defense against the Indians; but he was arrested for this procedure and thrown into prison by Arthur St. Clair, the representative of Pennsylvania. After a short confinement he was released on his promise to return to the custody of the law; but he broke his pledge, and instead of returning a prisoner made his appearance before many months at the head of a military force, re-asserting the right of Virginia to the government. A series of contests, outrages, and complaints

* Western Annals, page 111.

followed, which it would be out of place here to relate. Connolly seized upon Fort Pitt, arrested and imprisoned magistrates and private citizens, and practiced other acts of tyranny upon the people. He was further suspected of fostering the growing jealousies between the whites and the natives, in proof of which many instances of his cruelty and injustice to the Indians are related. On one occasion, when three friendly Shawanese had conducted safely some traders into Pittsburgh, he attempted to seize and detain them; but being foiled in his attempt by his uncle, Colonel Croghan, who had become alienated from him by his tyranny, he sent out some bad men under his command to waylay and murder them; and tradition relates that one of the Indians was slain.*

From the outset of the revolutionary movements Connolly was a tory; and with his fearless, adventurous temper, his capacity for martial affairs, and his knowledge of the country, he naturally became a leader in the military movements of the day. He planned, among others, a union in 1775 of the Northwestern Indians with the British troops in Canada,† which combined forces were to be led by him, and, having ravaged the frontier settlements, were to join the troops under Lord Dunmore in Virginia. To perfect his plans he visited General Gage in Boston, and after returning to Dunmore set out for the West bearing two sets of instructions; one on his person, the other carefully concealed in his saddle. As he traveled through Maryland his appearance excited suspicion, and he was seized near Hagerstown and sent back to Frederick, where the papers on his person were found and sent to Congress. General Washington, who was informed by one who was present when the genuine instructions were concealed, wrote to the proper authorities on the subject; but the papers, it appears, were never discovered. Connolly nevertheless was thrown into prison and kept in close confinement until 1781.

After the revolution he is said to have been a plotter of mischief in Kentucky, and ready for other adventures affecting the interests of the state. As a tory, he had forfeited his valuable tract of land at the Falls of the Ohio, which was afterward sold under an order from Virginia. Of his last appearance in the state the following very interesting account is given by Colonel Thomas Marshall in a letter to General Washington:

* Western Annals, page 129.

† *Ibid.*, page 151.

"About this time (November, 1788) arrived from Canada the famous Doctor (now Colonel) Connolly. His ostensible business was to inquire after and repossess himself of some lands he formerly held at the Falls of the Ohio; but I believe his real business was to sound the disposition of the leading men of this district respecting this Spanish business. He knew that both Col. Muter and myself had given it all the opposition in convention we were able to do, and before he left the district paid us a visit, though neither of us had the honor of the least acquaintance with him.

"He was introduced by Colonel John Campbell, formerly a prisoner in Canada, who previously informed us of the proposition he was about to make. He presently entered upon his subject, urged the great importance the navigation of the Mississippi must be to the inhabitants of the western waters, showed the absolute necessity of our possessing it, and concluded with assurances that were we disposed to assert our right respecting that navigation Lord Dorchester was disposed to give us powerful assistance; that his lordship had (I think he said) four thousand British troops in Canada, besides two regiments at Detroit, and could furnish us with arms, ammunition, clothing, and money; that with this assistance we might possess ourselves of New Orleans, fortify the Balize at the mouth of the river, and keep possession in spite of the utmost efforts of Spain to the contrary. He made very confident professions of Lord Dorchester's wishes to cultivate the most friendly intercourse with the people of this country and of his own desire to become serviceable to us, and with so much seeming sincerity that had I not been acquainted with his character as a man of intrigue and artful address I should in all probability have given him my confidence."*

These earliest representatives of the medical profession in Kentucky left no written record behind them of their observations or experience. Walker maintained a fair reputation throughout his life, and was trusted by the government of Virginia in some important transactions. Connolly, with great abilities, seems to have wasted his days in ambitious but fruitless schemes. Having taken the unpopular side in the revolutionary war, he probably suffered much unjust obloquy; but it is impossible to doubt, from all the testimony recorded against him, that he was a bold, bad man, given to intrigue, and unscrupulous in the use of means to accomplish his purposes.

* Western Annals, page 315.

FIRST SURGICAL OPERATION IN KENTUCKY.

In the Annals of the West, to which I am indebted for the foregoing particulars respecting the lives of Walker and Connolly, is contained the history of a surgical operation, probably the first ever performed by a white man in Kentucky; and, though it was not written by a surgeon, I can not help thinking that it is worthy of a place in our medical literature. The case was reported by Colonel James Smith, the subject of the operation, in a journal of his explorations in 1767, and is as follows:

"About eight days after I left my company at the mouth of the Tennessee, on my journey eastward, I got a cane-stab in my foot, which occasioned my leg to swell, and I suffered much pain. I was now in a doleful situation; far from any of the human species, excepting black Jamie (his servant) and the savages, and I knew not when I might meet with them. My case appeared desperate, and I thought something must be done. All the surgical instruments I had was a knife, a moccasin-awl, and a pair of bullet-molds. With these I determined to draw the snag from my foot, if possible. I stuck the awl in the skin, and with the knife I cut the flesh away from around the cane, and then commanded the mulatto fellow to catch it with the bullet-molds and pull it out, which he did. When I saw it, it seemed to be a shocking thing to be in a person's foot. It will therefore be supposed that I was very glad to have it out. The black fellow attended upon me, and obeyed my directions faithfully. I ordered him to search for Indian medicine, and told him to get me a quantity of bark from the root of a lynn-tree, which I made him beat on a stone with a tomahawk, and boil it in a kettle, and with the ooze I bathed my foot and leg; what remained when I had finished bathing I boiled to a jelly and made poultices thereof. As I had no rags, I made use of the green moss that grows upon logs, and wrapped it round with elm-bark; by this means (simple as it may seem) the swelling and inflammation in a great measure abated. As stormy weather appeared, I ordered Jamie to make us a shelter, which he did by erecting forks and poles, and covering them over with cane-tops, like a fodder-house. It was about one hundred yards from a large buffalo-road. As we were almost out of provisions, I commanded Jamie to take my gun, and I went along as well as I could, concealed myself

near the road, and killed a buffalo. When this was done we jerked the lean and freed the tallow out of the fat meat, which we kept to stew with our jerk as we needed it.

"I continued in this place till I could walk slowly without crutches. As I now lay near a great buffalo-road, I was afraid that the Indians might be passing that way and discover my fire-place; therefore I moved off some distance, where I remained till I killed an elk. As my foot was yet sore, I concluded that I would stay here until it was healed, lest by traveling too soon it might again be inflamed.

"In a few weeks after I proceeded on, and in October arrived in Carolina. I had now been eleven months in the wilderness, and during this time I had seen neither bread, money, women, nor spirituous liquors, and three months of which I saw none of the human species except Jamie."

TRANSYLVANIA UNIVERSITY.

The medical literature of Kentucky dates back a few years beyond the beginning of the present century, at which time a movement was made toward the organization of the Medical Department of Transylvania University. A charter for this institution was granted by the General Assembly of Virginia in 1785, mainly through the exertions of Colonel John Todd, a delegate from the "county of Kentucky," who shortly afterward fell at the disastrous battle of the Blue Licks. It was chartered, as expressed in the preamble to the act, "to promote the diffusion of useful knowledge, even among its remote citizens, whose situation in a barbarous neighborhood and savage intercourse might otherwise render unfriendly to science." Eight thousand acres of escheated lands, the property of British subjects in Kentucky, were vested in trustees for the benefit of the school, and the teachers and pupils were to be exempt from military duty.

In 1783 the institution was incorporated under the name of "Transylvania Seminary," when it was endowed with twelve thousand additional acres of land. But an act of the legislature, passed after Kentucky became a state, exempting lands from escheat, deprived the seminary of the principal part of this endowment.*

In 1785 Transylvania Seminary was opened in the house of Rev. David Rice, one of the most noted of the pioneer ministers of the

* Ranck's History of Lexington, page 40.

Presbyterian Church in Kentucky, who lived near Danville, and was the first teacher, and for some years the only one, in the school. It was removed to Lexington in 1788, having previously received a valuable donation in the shape of books from Rev. John Todd, uncle of the gallant Colonel Todd, and the first professor of sacred literature in the seminary. Among those who took a deep interest in the school is mentioned the name of John Filson, a man of unusual attainments, to whom Daniel Boone dictated a memoir of his life. He was from one of the New England States, and greatly in favor of bringing teachers to Kentucky from the North. Some offense was given by his zeal in that direction, and a writer in the *Kentucky Gazette* was provoked to ask him, somewhat sarcastically, "What peculiar charms had northern teachers to inspire virtue and suppress vice that southern teachers do not possess?"

But other and more serious jealousies were about to mar the prospects of the infant seminary. On its removal to Lexington a second teacher was appointed, and in 1794 a Baptist minister, "with inclinations to the Priestley school of theology,"* was elected principal. Sectarian prejudices were aroused by the appointment. The Baptists claimed that they had equal rights in the school, on the ground that it was founded by the state. The Presbyterians, on the other hand, insisted that the right of control belonged to them, because through their exertions it was that the institution was endowed. A split ensued between its supporters, and the Presbyterians, in 1796, proceeded to establish a school at Pisgah, a few miles distant from Lexington.† But fortunately these dissensions did not continue long, and in 1798 the two schools were merged in one, under the name of "Transylvania University," to be seated at Lexington. Its first president was Rev. James Moore, of the Episcopal Church, and Rev. Robert Stuart and Rev. James Blythe, Presbyterian clergymen, were associated with him as professors.

In 1799 steps were taken to give the institution the semblance of a university by creating law and medical departments. Dr. Samuel Brown and Dr. Frederick Ridgely, prominent physicians of Lexington, were elected about the same time to professorships, and Dr. Ridgely at once entered upon his duties, delivering a course of lectures to a small class on the practice of physic.

* Ranck's *History of Lexington*, page 42.

† *Ibid.*

In 1804 Dr. Blythe, who subsequently became professor of chemistry in the medical department, was elected president of the university. Dr. Keigely, after a single winter, resigned his chair, and Dr. James Fishback was appointed professor of the theory and practice of medicine. Nothing, however, appears to have resulted from the appointment. No instruction was given by the newly-elected professor, and the following year he resigned his professorship.

Again, in 1809, a systematic and more formal effort was made to get the medical department into operation, and several professors were appointed. Dr. B. W. Dudley was chosen professor of anatomy, Dr. Eliza Warfield professor of obstetrics, and Dr. Joseph Buchanan professor of the institutes of medicine. But the result was the same as before: for, although Dr. Buchanan went to work at once preparing a course of lectures, the organization was dissolved before any lectures were delivered, and no further attempt at establishing a medical school seems to have been made for several years.

In 1815 the project was renewed, when the name of Dr. William H. Richardson appeared in the list of professors; but the success of the measure was no greater than before. Finally in 1817 a faculty of signal ability was organized, including the names of Dudley, Drake, Richardson, Overton, and Blythe. Dr. Coleman Rogers was adjunct to the professor of anatomy. A full course of lectures was at last delivered by each professor. The class numbered twenty, one of whom, Dr. John Lawson McCullough, was admitted to the degree of doctor of medicine at the close of the session. The school at last had the promise of prosperity. The beginning was auspicious. The professors proved themselves teachers capable of attracting and interesting students, but they were not harmonious. Feuds grew up among them during the winter, and at the termination of the first session the faculty was dissolved, Drake returning to Cincinnati, and Overton, not a little disgusted with medical schools, removing to Nashville.

After so many abortive attempts to establish a medical department the friends of the measure were discouraged, and a year passed away without a renewal of the effort. Meanwhile a new impetus had been given to the academical department of the university by the election of the Rev. Horace Holley, LL. D., as president. The institution in the hands of this gifted man at once shook off the lethargy that had oppressed it, and acquired new life. Dr. Holley possessed all the

qualities of mind and manner that strike most forcibly on first appearance—he was quick, ready, brilliant, of the most pleasing address, uncommonly handsome, and as a speaker fluent, polished and imposing. He saw the importance of the department which had just fallen through, and began soon after his induction into office to devise measures for its reorganization. In the summer of 1819 a medical faculty was formed, embracing Dr. Charles Caldwell in the chair of the institutes of medicine, and Dr. Samuel Brown in that of theory and practice, with Dr. Dudley, Dr. Richardson, and Dr. Blythe in their former professorships.

This was the organization under which the medical department of Transylvania University commenced its brilliant career. For more than twenty-five years its prosperity was uninterrupted. From the fall of 1819 to the spring of 1837 it went on, the foremost school in the valley of the Mississippi, almost without a check or a jar. Its first class numbered thirty-seven students, and the number was nearly doubled the second year; by the fifth it had swelled to two hundred, and by the seventh to two hundred and eighty. Lexington and Kentucky had made liberal appropriations to it, and it was already in possession of a superior medical library, with the nucleus of an anatomical museum and the necessary chemical apparatus. In 1823 Dr. Drake was again elected to the chair of materia medica, which he had relinquished in 1818. I was in Lexington, a student attending my first course of lectures, when he returned to the school, and I saw him take the oath of office, and heard him deliver the Latin address required at that day of professors by the university at their inauguration. I am aware that large deductions must be made for first impressions on an enthusiastic, youthful mind; that much of the admiration created by new men and strange scenes is to be set down to the charm of novelty; but my conviction is still firm, after the lapse of these fifty years, that I have not since seen a more splendid combination of talent than adorned Transylvania University at that day.

In 1837 an attempt was made to transfer the medical department to Louisville, where it would command facilities for the study of anatomy and clinical medicine not afforded by Lexington; but after the measure had been concurred in by the professors some members receded from the agreement, and the result was the disruption of the faculty as well as of friendships that had existed for nearly twenty

years. The places of those members who decided to pursue the scheme of founding a school in Louisville, however, were promptly filled, and the friends of the institution believed that it was stronger than ever. Eberle, Cross, and Mitchell were called to the chairs vacated by Cooke, Caldwell, and the writer of this report. The citizens of Lexington erected a new and more commodious edifice for its use, and a liberal appropriation was made for the increase of its library, museum, and chemical apparatus. Its classes for a time increased, and remained large for several years; but at last it became evident to the professors that the school could not be sustained; and just before the war of the rebellion it was closed. The causes which determined the professors to remove it to Louisville had brought about the inevitable result.

The good accomplished by the Transylvania Medical School was immense. It infused a higher scientific tone into the whole professional mind of the West. It brought a sound medical education within easy reach of multitudes of young men who without it must have been content to practice physic without the advantages of medical lectures. Its influence in raising the standard of the profession in all the western states was soon manifest. While in operation more than two thousand of its students were admitted to the degree of doctor of medicine.

DR. FREDERICK RIDGELY.

The first public course of lectures on medicine in Kentucky was delivered in Transylvania University, as has been remarked, by Dr. Frederick Ridgely, who subsequently claimed some of the most eminent physicians of the state as his students. Dr. Ridgely was descended of parents of the first respectability, and was born May 25, 1757, on Elk Ridge, Ann Arundel County, Maryland. Having pursued the usual course of collegiate studies at the Academy of Newark, Delaware—at that time the most noted school in that part of the country—he entered upon the study of medicine with Dr. Philip Thomas, of Fredericktown, in the seventeenth year of his age. At the breaking out of the revolutionary war he was appointed surgeon to a corps of riflemen when only nineteen years old, and with his command marched to the North, arriving at Boston only a few days after the battle of Bunker Hill. During the investment of Boston

which followed he discharged the duties of hospital physician, rendered peculiarly arduous by the unusual amount of sickness and mortality that prevailed among the troops; and he was with the army of Washington through the trying year of 1776. In 1777 his native state conferred upon him an additional mark of her regard by appointing him surgeon to the Fourth Maryland Regiment of Regulars, in which capacity he was serving at the descent on Staten Island, and at the battles of White Marsh, Brandywine, and Germantown. Philadelphia having been evacuated by the British in 1778, he saw an opportunity of improving his medical knowledge by the lectures in the Philadelphia College about to commence, and accordingly resigned his commission in the army with that view. Dr. Rush was then in the chair of chemistry, and his colleagues were Kuhn and Shippen. Dr. Rush, as physician-general of hospitals, had seen much of his pupil in the service, and had conceived a most favorable opinion of his abilities, which was confirmed by the intercourse of the winter. The friendship formed between them at this period was maintained by a correspondence which was kept up between them to the close of Dr. Rush's life.

But Ridgely was not permitted to remain long enough in Philadelphia to obtain, as he had hoped to do, his degree of M. D. Early in the spring of 1779 he was appointed surgeon to a vessel about to sail with letters of marque and reprisal from that port. The ship made a short cruise off the coast of Virginia, when, falling in with an enemy of superior size, she was chased into the Chesapeake and after a severe engagement captured. As his vessel struck her colors to the enemy Ridgely leaped overboard and narrowly escaped being made prisoner by swimming two miles to shore. As soon as he had opportunity he again sought a place in the service, and was continued an officer in the medical department to the close of the war.

On the restoration of peace he resigned his commission in the army and entered upon private practice in his native county, between Annapolis and Baltimore, where his reputation acquired in the field soon gave him an extensive business. But he thought he saw an ampler field for usefulness in the wilderness opening up in Kentucky, and after a very short sojourn among his old friends joined the tide of emigration to the West, and in 1790 settled in Lexington. Here his large experience in military hospitals, coupled with that dignity,

ease, and gentleness of deportment which at once conciliated the stranger, soon placed him in the front of his profession. In manners and appearance he was said to bear a striking resemblance to his friend Dr. Rush, whom he also emulated in his devotion to scientific medicine as well as to the cause of his country, which not long after he arrived at Lexington again demanded his services. He attended one or two military expeditions against the Indians, in the capacity of surgeon, after coming to Kentucky, and in 1794 was made surgeon-general to the army of General Wayne. The decisive campaign of that year having secured the safety of the border settlements for a time, Dr. Ridgely took a final leave of military life, and resumed the practice of medicine and surgery in Lexington. His fame as a practitioner rose to a height that brought patients to him from the most distant settlements in the state.

Nor was the whole of his time devoted to the practice of his profession. His fine scholarship and large experience fitted him well for the office of an instructor, and he in a little while drew around him a number of students, to whom he delighted in imparting his stores of practical knowledge. He introduced them to the bedside of the sick, "where they were urged to watch the progress of disease, to learn its cause, to note its symptoms, and where they learned to administer the medicines prescribed for its removal and mark its termination; so that his pupils became instructed in the art of healing from the great source of all correct knowledge, the book of nature."*

Dr. Ridgely having been the first professor in Transylvania University to deliver a course of lectures on medicine, to him belongs the honor of having introduced public medical teaching in Western America. In the capacity of trustee he rendered the most valuable services to that institution for many years, being one of the most active of the advocates of a medical department, which at last owed its organization largely to his enlightened influence. After a single course of lectures, however, he resigned his professorship, nor did he again desire a chair in the school. The loss of his wife in 1822, following upon infirmities which age had begun to induce, determined him to relinquish the labors of his profession, and he died at the house of his daughter, in Dayton, Ohio, on the 21st of November, in the sixty-eighth year of his age.

*Short. Trans. Jour. Med., vol. I, p. 445.

In person (says Dr. Short in a biographical sketch to which I am indebted for the foregoing facts in relation to the life of Dr. Ridgely) the subject of this notice "was rather below the ordinary stature, but most symmetrically proportioned. His motions in walking were particularly graceful, and even in advanced life he moved with a step firm and elastic." The suavity of manner by which he was characterized expressed the kindness of disposition which rendered him always a most welcome visitor at the bed of sickness and at the house of sorrow.

Dr. Ridgely was not an author, nor have I been able to find any thing from his pen; but the fact that he gave the first public course of medical lectures ever delivered in Kentucky gives him a title to a place in a history of her medical literature.

DR. SAMUEL BROWN.

About the time that Dr. Brown was made a professor in Transylvania University, in conjunction with Dr. Ridgely, he became a writer for the medical press. The first medical paper from the pen of a Kentucky physician that I have been able to trace is one written by him for the American Medical Repository, at that time, I believe, the only journal of medicine published in the United States. It bears date June, 1799, and is contained in the fourth volume of that journal. In the same volume is the report of a case by Dr. Brown, dated November, 1800, together with a second report of a later date, and these are followed in subsequent numbers by other medical histories, which, as possessing an inherent interest, as well as being matters of curiosity at this day, I shall notice somewhat in detail.

His first paper was entitled "A Curious Instance of Disease, in which the feeling of the patient was abolished, while the power of motion remained unimpaired." The subject of the affection was a lady of Bardstown, aged about forty years, and when Dr. Brown saw her she had been deprived for more than two years of sensation in her hands and feet. She was quite insensible to the effects of cutting instruments or of having coals of fire applied to them. "In one instance," Dr. B. remarks, "when she was engaged in shaping a piece of wood with a knife, she incautiously turned her eyes on some other object, and cut off the end of the thumb of her left hand without perceiving the smallest sense of pain. She can not," continues Dr. B., "from her sensations discover the least difference between a hot and a cold

iron, and has frequently burnt the skin and flesh to a considerable depth by mistaking the one for the other. These wounds and burns heal without any uncommon difficulty. Notwithstanding this total loss of sensibility, she retains the power of motion in full perfection, and pursues her domestic employments without any remarkable inconvenience. All her animal and vital functions are in a natural, healthful state, and her spirits are regular—nay, even cheerful. She feels no uneasiness from her complaint except a sense of fullness in the veins. As the sense of touch is entirely lost, she finds it difficult to retain substances in her hands, and on turning her eyes aside often drops glasses, plates, etc., which she holds in safety as long as she looks at them."

In concluding his report Dr. Brown remarks, "The doctrine of the nervous system is yet so much embarrassed with controverted facts and visionary theories that I shall not attempt an explanation of the phenomena of the above case. It is only by carefully noting and recording facts that we can hope to arrive at truth in our physiological investigations." He lived to see much of the obscurity which rested upon the nervous system cleared up, and light and order substituted for visionary theories.

In the same volume of the Repository we have the report of a case dated November 10, 1800. It is entitled "Extraordinary case of a man who appeared to have *three testicles*." The subject was a married man, thirty-seven years of age, the father of several children, and in excellent health. About two months before applying to Dr. Brown he perceived a slight uneasiness in the ring of the abdominal muscle on the right side, and felt a small tumor, which was easily pushed back into the abdomen. It was suspended by a distinct cord, which "in size and feeling exactly resembled those of the other two testicles." Dr. Brown felt distinctly the action of the cremaster muscle as often as he directed the patient to retract the testicles, and was fully convinced, as were also Dr. L. Warfield and Dr. Lewis Marshall, who examined the case at his request, that it was a veritable third testicle.

This volume of the Repository contains the history of another remarkable case by Dr. Brown. A young lady, aged about nineteen years, punctured her foot with a nail, which gave rise to the most acute pain in the limb, extending to the knee, the hip, and the back. Tetanic rigidity followed. "A physician was sent for who unluckily

was at a horse-race, and declined to visit her. He, however, sent a few anodyne pills, which she took, but without any material advantage." The accident occurred on Sunday, the 28th of October, and Dr. Brown saw her the Wednesday following. He found the patient in extreme agony, with spasms in her back and neck, and acute pains in her ankle, knee, and hip-joint. Not the slightest appearance of inflammation could be discerned in the puncture; but the heel was cold, the skin pale, and nothing but blood and serum could be pressed from the wound. He introduced a probe, and was surprised to find that she was scarcely sensible of pain from a very harsh examination of the extent and direction of the puncture. At length the point of his probe came in contact with a part which possessed extreme sensibility. He made an incision with a scalpel across the heel quite down to the bone, on which the whole of the complaint seemed to be removed, and he flattered himself that he should be able to prevent a recurrence of the spasms. He washed the wound with spirits of turpentine; and having made a dossil of lint, covered it with powdered sulphate of copper and spirits of turpentine, and pressed it down to the bottom of the incision. This application gave severe pain. A large dose of laudanum was administered and repeated every four hours. A blister was also applied to the ankle and a warm poultice to the heel. Two grains of calomel were ordered every hour when the patient was awake, and an ounce of mercurial ointment was rubbed upon the legs, arms, and back; and Dr. Brown adds that he endeavored to hasten salivation by rubbing calomel on her gums. She slept about two hours, and continued tolerably easy until the next day, when her spasms returned and all the symptoms were greatly aggravated. Wine and bark, which had proved so efficacious in the hands of Dr. Rush, were tried; but the stomach immediately rejected them. Two ounces of mercurial ointment had now been rubbed in, twenty-two grains of calomel had been taken in the form of pills, and a scruple rubbed on the gums, when Dr. Brown, despairing of being able to excite ptyalism in time to prevent a fatal termination of the disease, directed fifteen drops of the tincture of cantharides every hour until the symptoms of inflammation in the bowels should forbid its further exhibition. Hot poultices were continued to the wound, which were filled with the root of the *phytolacca decandra*. I conclude the history of the case in the words of the author:

"After the patient had taken a drachm and a half of the tincture of cantharides she was seized with a sensation of heat and burning in the stomach, which, becoming more and more severe, extended through the whole course of the alimentary canal, and produced a number of stools, mixed with blood and mucus. The inflammation of the stomach occasioned vomiting, and the acute pains in her bowels resembled those which are felt in the most violent attacks of dysentery. *Immediately on the occurrence of these symptoms all the tetanic affections disappeared, and never returned.* In order to mitigate the disease which I had produced in the alimentary canal I gave large quantities of mucilaginous drinks and anodyne enemata, which afforded considerable ease. Fortunately, however, the day after this inflammatory state of the bowels came on the mercury, which before seemed quite inert, began to show its effect on the salivary glands, and as we have often seen in dysentery, removed the disease of the intestines. Some slight affection of the kidneys appeared, with bloody urine, but soon left the patient without any complaint, except a very moderate salivation, which continued for about two weeks. The wound began to form pus eight days after the accident, and was kept open several weeks, from an apprehension that it closed the spasms might return."

The fifth volume of the same work contains the details of an interesting case of *poisoning* in a child by the seeds of the *Datura stramonium*, communicated by Dr. Brown in a letter to Dr. Mitchell, one of the editors of the Repository.

In volume 2 of the same work Dr. Brown gives an account of "*Two cases of convulsions, alternating with insanity, relieved by violent pressure over the stomach.*" The cases were extraordinary. In the first, a man about twenty five years of age was seized with convulsions while excited in an argument with a friend. The convulsive movements were succeeded by insanity, which after a few moments gave way to convulsions again. Before Dr. Brown despaired of the efficacy of antispasmodics he had given his patient two ounces of laudanum without producing any sensible effect. Recollecting then that he had seen cases of hysteria relieved by a bandage tied tightly round the body, he attempted to apply one in this case, and in doing so pressed with some force against the stomach. He perceived an immediate change in the countenance of the patient, and on increasing the

pressure the young man smiled, and expressed himself relieved. On withdrawing his hand all the symptoms recurred, and were again relieved by the pressure.

The second patient was a lady about twenty years of age, who had been subject from her infancy to convulsions of a hysterical character, in one of which Dr. Brown found her. He says, "I immediately pressed my knuckles with great force into the pit of the stomach, and in less than five minutes she was free from convulsions and her mind composed. I withdrew my hand and the complaint returned, as in the other case. I left a person with her to continue the pressure, and found her well the next day.

Dr. Brown's communications to the Medical Repository were occasional and brief, consisting of familiar letters addressed to one of the editors. Besides the articles noticed he wrote for Bruce's Journal (vol. 1) a short account of the Niter Caverns of Kentucky, and the sixth volume of the Transactions of the American Philosophical Society contains a paper from him on the same subject. In 1818, in a letter to Professor Silliman, he described "a curious substance which accompanies the native niter of Kentucky and Africa," which was published in the first volume of the American Journal of Science and Art. He was an industrious writer, but composed no elaborate papers. His correspondence was extensive, and his letters to Dr. Rush, Mr. Jefferson, and other scientific men at home and abroad would be read with more interest doubtless than his medical papers, if published; but all those, it is to be feared, are now beyond the reach of the biographer. Soon after returning home from Scotland he wrote to a friend in Edinburgh, asking him to use his influence with mechanics of skill to induce them to migrate to America, for the purpose of taking part in the erection of the public buildings about to be commenced in the city of Washington. The following extract from the letter written in reply will be read with interest. It is dated Edinburgh, June 7, 1795, not long after Dr. Brown left the medical school there, and alludes to some of his fellow-students from America:

"My government, anxious for the welfare of its people, has prohibited any artificer from leaving this happy island to settle in America, and there is therefore little probability of my being able to send you any masons or carpenters. . . . As I wrote you so

lately, I have no news to send you, except that Adams, Brockenbrough, and Proudfit have passed their examinations before the professors, and are to take their degree on the 24th of this month. No fewer than twenty are are to be commended at that time to dispatch inhabitants to Pluto's regions *secundem artem*."

Dr. Samuel Brown, the first professor of medicine in Transylvania University, and the father of Kentucky medical literature, was born January 30, 1769, in the county of Augusta, now Rockbridge, Virginia. His father, the Rev. John Brown, was a learned Presbyterian minister, who devoted a portion of his time to the education of young men. He had charge of a classical school in his neighborhood, where the ancient languages were carefully taught in connection with the branches of science embraced in a liberal education. The mother of Dr. Brown was Margaret, daughter of John Preston, of Virginia, from whom so many of the distinguished men of the southern states trace their lineage. Her sons, John, James, and Preston, as well as the subject of the present memoir, all rose to distinction. One of her daughters married Dr. Humphreys, a noted physician of Staunton, Virginia, and another married Dr. Craighead, long known as an able and eminent Presbyterian clergyman in the neighborhood of Nashville.

It was under the eye of his judicious father that Dr. Brown acquired the rudiments of his fine classical education. On reaching the age of sixteen he was transferred to the family of the Rev. James Waddel, the blind preacher, rendered famous by the description of William Wirt in the *British Spy*. Here he remained eighteen months, and was then removed to Dickinson College, Pennsylvania, which he entered as a junior, and at the expiration of his senior year graduated with distinguished honor as a Bachelor of Arts.*

On completing his collegiate course he entered upon the study of medicine with his brother-in-law, Dr. Humphreys, at Staunton, Virginia, and after a few months proceeded to Philadelphia, where he became a private pupil of Dr. Rush, with whom, while under his care, he formed the most pleasant social relations. Without remaining in the medical school at Philadelphia to take his degree, he repaired to the University of Edinburgh, where his illustrious preceptor had graduated a few years before, and where the opportunities for acquiring a thorough

*La Roche. Amer. Med. Biog.

medical education were deemed at that time the best in all the world. Edinburgh was at that day what Leyden had been half a century before, and what Paris became half a century afterward, to the medical profession. Brown was intent on making the best possible use of his opportunities, and applied himself assiduously to the acquisition of knowledge from every quarter. He was never a contracted student; but with a mind alive to every human interest, he sought to store it with every variety of learning. No doubt many students of medicine came home from Europe better instructed than he was in the details of his profession, but no one, it is believed, ever returned with a larger fund of general information. His tastes were scholarly and elegant, and he found in the "modern Athens," as Edinburgh was then styled, ample scope for their gratification.

He was not able to graduate at Edinburgh, from having failed to fulfill certain of the requisitions of that celebrated school; but obtained the degree of M. D. from the University of Aberdeen.* With a number of others, fellow-students who accompanied him from America, were Hosack, Davidge, Ephraim McDowell, and also Brockenbrough, of Virginia, referred to in the letter just quoted. Dr. Brown was in the habit of relating to his classes in Transylvania that three of the number—Davidge, Hosack, and himself—resolved that on returning home they would become founders of medical schools in their country. "The idea," he said, "seemed to the students of the old country not a little ludicrous, and the young Americans became the butts of a good deal of ridicule on account of it; but we were not to be laughed out of our projects," he added, "however visionary they appeared. And now, gentlemen," he continued, "you behold the result: Hosack has been a long time a professor in the College of Physicians and Surgeons at New York; Davidge went to work, almost as soon as he reached home, laying the foundation of the University of Maryland, which has grown into a great school. I was appointed a professor in this university a little while after I came to the backwoods of Kentucky, many years ago, before either of my fellow-students had become teachers. The scepter placed in my hands, it is true, turned out to be a barren one; the country was not yet ripe for a medical school. But after long years and many failures a successful organization was effected, and my fondly-cherished

*La Roche. Amer. Med. Biog.

vision was at last realized, and I am here to-day before a class of two hundred students."

On his return home he settled first in the neighborhood of the newly projected city of Washington. With his natural advantages of person and manner, aided by a medical education so thorough, he was not long securing an extensive and lucrative practice; but after a year or two he relinquished his flattering prospects on the Potomac and followed his brothers to Kentucky. He settled in Lexington in 1797, and when the first trial of a medical department was made in Transylvania University, two years later, he was chosen professor of the theory and practice of medicine and chemistry. Dr. Brown had for rivals in the practice of his profession in Lexington Dr. Ridgely, Dr. Fishback, and Dr. Pindell, all physicians of superior minds and acquirements, and of the most popular address; but it does them no injustice to say that in public estimation he took precedence of them all. To a knowledge of medicine not inferior to theirs, he added a more enlarged culture and more varied attainments acquired by travel in Europe, and he had besides a readiness with his pen which soon gave him a wider reputation. When the choice fell upon him in 1799 as medical professor in the infant university there can be no doubt that he was the most prominent physician west of the mountains.

It is related in Ranck's History of Lexington, on the authority of Michaux, that Dr. Brown was the first American physician to practice vaccination. It is stated that he introduced it into Lexington several years before the first experiments with it had been made in New York or Philadelphia, and that up to 1802 he had vaccinated upward of five hundred persons in Kentucky.

In 1806 his brother, James Brown, finding it necessary to seek a milder climate on account of his health, removed to New Orleans, and Dr. Brown, impelled by the same feelings of devotion to his brother which brought him to Kentucky, gave up his flattering prospects in Lexington and settled in the same city. As before in Virginia and in Kentucky, his success in New Orleans was almost immediate. His reputation had preceded him, and in a short time he acquired a lucrative business. Having occasion two years subsequently to make an excursion to Nashville, he met near that city Miss Catherine Percy, to whom he was married the following year. This event was followed

by another change of residence. In New Orleans his success had been so flattering that he was naturally reluctant to give up a third time the chance of acquiring renown as well as wealth from his profession; but the wishes of his wife to remain near her relatives finally prevailed with him, and he settled down on a plantation in the neighborhood of Natchez. The practice of physic was now given up, except occasional calls to his sick friends and gratuitous attentions to the neighboring poor. In the society of his intelligent and lovely wife, with wealth and surrounded by influential family connections, here it seemed that he was likely to remain. But in a few years his prospects were again altered. His accomplished young wife died, leaving him with three little children. The youngest of these soon followed its mother to the grave. His residence was made insupportable by these successive afflictions; and, removing with his negroes to the territory of Alabama, he settled on a plantation near Huntsville, in the neighborhood of his brother-in-law and cherished friend, Colonel Thomas Percy.

His biographer and friend, Dr. La Roche, says that he "now devoted himself almost exclusively to the education of his children, and for several years was scarcely a day separated from them." But this, added to the cares of his plantation, did not prove to be sufficient occupation for his active mind, and very naturally, when his daughter, the elder of his children, had reached an age at which he thought she might properly be sent from home to be educated, it turned again to his profession. He reverted with zeal to the project, which amid all his other cares he had never wholly abandoned, of founding a medical school in the valley of the Mississippi.* His large professional acquaintance eminently qualified him for determining the site as well as for selecting the men for such a school. Moreover, his own qualifications for taking part in it were of a very high order. His experience, his travels, his observation of disease in various countries, added to his pleasant elocution, rendered him a captivating teacher. Among the physicians west of the mountains who had struck him as possessing the qualities of mind and temper to take the lead in building up a school of medicine was Dr. Daniel Drake, whose rare abilities had been exhibited during his connection with Transylvania University in 1817. And with Dr. Drake it was his first purpose to co-operate in

* La Roche. Am. Med. Biog.

organizing a school.²⁶ A charter for the Ohio Medical College, embracing Dr. Brown's name as one of the professors, had been drawn up by Dr. Drake, and was before the legislature of Ohio early in 1819. But Dr. Brown was not so highly gifted as his friend in the prophetic faculty. He failed to foresee, as Dr. Drake was convinced he did, that Cincinnati was destined to be the seat of the great medical school of the West. Lexington to his mind, on the contrary, appeared to possess superior advantages for such an institution. Lexington was at that day a city of greater note than Cincinnati. It was the center of a highly refined, wealthy, and cultivated population, and the seat of a university which was rising rapidly into notice. Besides all these considerations, he had twenty years before held a professorship in that university, and had many old friends and associates still living in Lexington. When therefore his former chair was tendered to him, on the reorganization of its medical department, while as yet doubtful whether Dr. Drake would succeed with his school, or even in his attempt to obtain a charter for it from the legislature, he decided to accept it.

On the first Wednesday in November, in regular course, he delivered his first introductory lecture in Transylvania University, and entered actively upon his duties as professor of the theory and practice of medicine. Of the rapid growth of the school the history has already been given. In its first years it attracted students from the old states east of the mountains, and before it had been six years in operation was in respect to numbers the second medical school in the United States.

The outward circumstances by which Dr. Brown was now surrounded appeared in every way suited to fix him in his purposes. Greater success in the main professional scheme of his life he could hardly have desired. He was the idol of the social circle in which he moved. As a teacher he stood high, and could see that he was exerting a good influence on his profession; but none of these, nor all combined, could avail to keep him in the new sphere to which he was so well suited. The secret of this was more a want of harmony in the faculty than his characteristic love of change. His social relations with some of his colleagues were far from agreeable. Some recollection of the feuds which distracted the school in 1817 probably remained with a portion of the faculty. The practice of teaching

* La Roche. Op. cit.

private classes prevailed in the school. Dudley, Caldwell, Drake, and Richardson each had a large number of private pupils, and the rivalry thus engendered intensified the old jealousies among the professors. In the winter of 1824-5 an unfortunate personal difficulty occurred in Frankfort between a brother of Dr. Dudley and Dr. Preston Brown. This affair still further estranged Dr. Brown from his influential colleague and rendered his situation in the school less pleasant. In the spring of 1825 he resigned.

Dr. La Roche says that he tendered his resignation "in favor of his friend, Dr. Drake, after remaining in the school until it had acquired sufficient celebrity to insure its stability and success." No doubt he was gratified to surrender his chair to so worthy a successor, and gratified too to leave the school in so prosperous a condition. Other considerations also doubtless influenced him in his determination to retire from it; but it was the unpleasant state of feeling in the faculty, as I have been assured by Dr. Drake, more than any thing else, that decided him to take the step. His happiness consisted largely in the indulgence of the social affections. He was eminently a philanthropist. It was necessary to his peace of mind that he should be at peace with all the world. Not only was he a warm friend, but I think no one who was ever brought into close relation to him could fail to remark how ready he was to apply all his intellectual resources to promoting the good of others, rather than to the advancement of his own interests. I can never forget the enthusiasm with which, when I was his student, he spoke to me of the recto-vesical operation of Sanson and Vacca Bellingiri, and afterward of lithotrity, when it had been successfully executed by Civiale, as a substitute for lithotomy, which he seemed to regard with all the horror felt for that operation by the father of medicine, who bound his pupils in the well-known Hippocratic oath not to perform it. When the effort was made, toward the close of the last century, to elect a convention in the state favorable to the gradual emancipation of slavery, he united his efforts with those of Mr. Clay, and of his brothers, James and John Brown, to secure that beneficent measure. In his profession his efforts tended always to advance its usefulness and dignity and to elevate its tone. By his example and in all his addresses to his students he labored to promote harmony in its ranks; and the crowning effort of his life was to organize a society whose members should pledge themselves to strive in every way to promote that object.

This society was styled "*The Kappa Lambda Association of Hippocrates*," and was instituted at Lexington. The Coan Sage was selected as the patron of the body, and as a model eminently worthy of imitation. A promise in terms similar to the Hippocratic oath was exacted of each member on his admission, in order to which he must receive a unanimous vote of the members present. Besides pledging himself to live in peace with his brethren in and out of the society, and to do every thing honorable in his power to promote their welfare, he bound himself to abide implicitly by a stringent code of ethics that had been prepared for the guidance of the members in their intercourse with each other and with society at large.*

He hoped to see enrolled under its banners all the leading, reputable, and influential physicians of our country. It was organized soon after he returned to Lexington, where he spent his winters while in the university. He proposed that branches should be established wherever a few well-disposed physicians could be found ready to co-operate in the work of elevating the profession. He looked forward with the liveliest satisfaction to the results which he believed would flow from this association, not only in cultivating fraternal feeling among physicians, but in fostering emulation among them, and thus advancing medical knowledge. And it was one of the pleasing anticipations in which he indulged during his last years in Transylvania University, that as life declined he might go round from one of these societies to another, as a patriarch rejoicing in the improved condition of his children.

Very much that his sanguine and benevolent temper led him to expect from the Kappa Lambda Association doubtless never was realized; and yet the society was not founded in vain. Many local societies were established, which gradually acquired importance and efficiency, and the movement imparted a better tone to the profession throughout our country. In Philadelphia a medical journal, at his suggestion, was put forth in 1825 under the auspices of the association, which at once took rank among the best of our periodical publications. This was the *North American Medical and Surgical Journal*, which was conducted by Drs. Hugh L. Hodge, Charles D. Meigs, Franklin Bache, B. H. Coates, and R. La Roche, and continued to appear quarterly for six consecutive years, during which time twelve

* La Roche. Op. cit.

volumes were issued. The influence of the society upon the profession, in that city at least, was most beneficial. Before its establishment, it is asserted by Dr. La Roche, the medical men of Philadelphia, "although inferior to none elsewhere in point of intelligence, scientific attainment, or practical skill, so far from fraternizing together, lived in an almost constant state of warfare. Quarreling and even worse," the same writer continues, "was not uncommon among them, and now and then street-fights occurred." But under the influence of the society this state of things soon began to give way. "Comparative harmony was restored among its members, and before long, through their influence, among other medical men around them." Nor was this all. "At its meetings much was done to excite emulation among its members and to promote the advancement of medical science."*

The parent society, owing to the jealousies that existed among the professors in Transylvania University, failed from the first to enlist the interest of some of the leading members of the faculty, who never ceased to regard it with distrust. Dr. Dudley and Dr. Caldwell both kept aloof from it, on the ground of its being a secret institution, and in about ten years from its organization the society in Lexington ceased to hold its meetings. "But," to quote again from Dr. La Roche, "the work of reform was in a great measure accomplished. Peace among doctors was comparatively restored, and is now seldom broken: and when the unwelcome event occurs the infractor, whatever be his social or professional position, or the wrong he may have suffered, so far from eliciting the approbation of his medical brethren, is openly and decidedly censured by all. I surely can not be wrong," continues this amiable writer, "when I say that the originator, organizer, and active promoter of a plan of federation among us so complete, so harmless, and at the same time so promising of fruitful results, and which has brought forth such fruit, if not every where, at least in some places, is entitled to the gratitude of every American physician who feels an interest in the honor and dignity of his profession."†

Dr. Brown was elected a member of the American Philosophical Society on the 18th of April, 1800, and the honor was the more esteemed because it was understood to have been conferred through the influence of Dr. Rush and Mr. Jefferson. His turn of mind was

* La Roche. Op. cit.

† Amer. Med. Biog.

toward general science, and many of its departments he cultivated with no inconsiderable success. At an early period in its history he delivered in Transylvania University a grandious course of lectures on chemistry. He was active in organizing societies for the discussion of questions relating to literature and science, and in promoting improvements in agriculture and the useful arts. He was probably the first American to make known to his countrymen the discovery of the art of lithography in Europe. In a letter to his brother, Mr. John Brown, in which he announces the discovery, he enlarges upon the great future of the invention, and suggests places in Kentucky where suitable stone for the purpose could be procured. It was Dr. Brown who first suggested the process now in use for clarifying or cleansing ginseeng, and thus rendering that article fit for the Chinese market. In the course of some chemical researches it occurred to him that steam might be used advantageously in the distillation of spirits, and he had the gratification to learn on trial that his process could be applied with the greatest advantage on a large scale.*

Dr. Brown's death was caused by apoplexy, in the third attack of which he died. His constitution was robust and plethoric, and until assailed by disease of the brain he had for many years enjoyed uninterrupted and excellent health. But in 1826 he experienced an attack of cerebral congestion, which for some time deprived him of the power of speech. During the winter of 1827-8 he was threatened often with a repetition of the disease, as indicated by pain and sense of fullness in the head, attended at times by a loss of memory. In the spring of 1828, on his passage to Europe, and on his return in the autumn of the same year, he again experienced some alarming symptoms. And the following spring they recurred with some severity, after which he recovered so far as to inspire his friends with the hope that he was secure from a repetition of his alarming complaint. But the hope proved illusive. On the 24th of December, 1829, he was seized with symptoms more threatening than before, and died on the 12th of January, 1830, in the sixty-second year of his age.†

Dr. Brown, with whom it may be said our medical literature originated, was in every respect a remarkable man. In stature he was much above the ordinary size of men, and in person comely and imposing. He was of a noble aspect, and his manners were in keeping with his

* La Roche. Op. cit.

† *Ibid.*

commanding presence. Gifted by nature with a strong, active, inquisitive mind, his superior natural powers were set off to advantage by an excellent education. A disciplined scholar, whose mind had been enlarged and polished by intercourse with the world; witty, fluent in speech, full of general knowledge and anecdote gathered from extensive travel, he was fitted to shine as a lecturer; and if necessity or taste had turned his attention seriously to the practice of medicine he might easily have attained the first rank as a practitioner. But with all his great native powers and his attainments which were at once varied, showy, and useful, he failed to reach the highest distinction as a teacher. In the school with him were professors of less mind and much less learning, who nevertheless were looked upon by his pupils as profounder and more original thinkers, and whose lectures attracted far more attention. He was indeed a discursive rather than severe student of medicine, and not a little inclined to dodge professional drudgery. For many years during the prime of his life he withdrew, as we have seen, almost entirely from the practice of physic, and consequently when he came to teach it he was compelled to rely chiefly upon the experience of others, owing to which cause his lectures wanted the authority which would have been given to them by a large personal contact with disease. He had no hobbies in medicine, no views peculiar to himself, no cherished theory or system which he felt bound to urge from year to year. In the modesty of his nature he was disposed to claim even less originality than really attached to his lectures; and perhaps what detracted more than any other circumstance from his weight as a teacher was his readiness to abandon old doctrines and still more old plans of practice for something novel. I have never forgotten the expression of delight with which, in the winter of 1824, as his lectures were drawing to a close, he spoke to me of Good's "Study of Medicine" that had just been published in this country. "Ah! sir," exclaimed he, "I shall deliver a very different course of lectures on the practice next winter after studying that great work."

Undoubtedly this fickleness of opinion detracted from the force of Dr. Brown's authority as a teacher. It provoked the criticism of his colleagues, in which some of them indulged liberally; and it can easily be believed that students would not listen with the same interest to doctrines which might be surrendered before another season. Dr. Caldwell, the most scholarly of his associates, on account of this

readiness to seize upon novelties, pursue them eagerly for a little while, and then drop them for something newer still, compared him to "a cur-dog hunting rabbits." The great John Hunter was in the habit of saying that he "held opinions which he was resolved never to give up until he gave up the ghost." If Dr. Brown had possessed some of the pertinacity of the old English surgeon, he would doubtless have passed with his students for a greater man.

Like almost all great men, Dr. Brown was free from affectation. In manners he was simple and natural. No one could be further from the pedantry that was once supposed to be inseparable from our profession, and he was always ready to turn it into ridicule when he encountered it in others. He was once consulting with Dr. Fishback, a popular physician of Lexington, and once elected to a professorship in her university, who inclined somewhat to this weakness. The patient was a child, as I have heard Dr. Caldwell relate the story, and a warm foot bath was agreed upon as a part of the treatment. Dr. Fishback, as attending physician, gave the directions. "You will immerse your child's lower extremities," he proceeded to say to the mother, "in some tepid water, and afterward use friction freely with a napkin." Dr. Brown saw from the woman's manner that she was lost in what he called this "thicket of hard words," and at once relieved her of her embarrassment by saying, "Bathe your child's feet and legs in warm water, madam, and then wipe them dry with a towel."

Dr. Brown adhered to the ancient custom of sitting while he lectured, literally "filling a chair" in the school. He read well, with a pleasant voice and earnest manner. His lectures announced few theories, but abounded in facts and anecdotes. He had a compendious way of dealing with doctrines that appeared to him absurd. He never stopped to make a labored argument against them; but after a single blow that he considered effectual went on with his subject. Thus, referring to Clutterbuck's theory of fever, of which one of his colleagues was a warm advocate, he would say, if the poison of fever is something that makes its first impression on the stomach, and acts only when the stomach is empty, all that one has to do in a malarious atmosphere is to avoid swallowing his saliva till after breakfast. Of anecdotes he related a great many, and always in the happiest style. His lectures on hypochondria were especially entertaining on this account; and his students expected them from year to year with a

feeling of delight. The valedictory address with which he concluded his course in 1824 was the most impressive that I have ever listened to. He closed it with the following story:

"When I was a student in Edinburgh I heard of a professor in one of the universities of Scotland who was subject to dislocation of the lower jaw. The oftener this accident occurs, as you have been taught by the professor of surgery, the more easily it is brought about. In this case it had occurred so often that it was likely to be induced every time the professor yawned, if he was not on his guard to prevent it; and so it became necessary for him to keep a surgeon constantly near him. This he did in the shape of his body-servant, who had acquired the art of reducing the dislocation. His students had observed that yawning was sympathetic, and when at any time his lectures grew tiresome they had only to set up a general yawning to provoke the same movement in him; whereupon his inferior maxillary was pretty sure to fly from its socket. In the pause that ensued his students, pretending to think that the lecture was concluded, would hurry from the lecture-room, leaving his servant to reduce the luxation. No doubt, gentlemen," he added with a pathos that touched the most thoughtless of his class, and the more because they were the last words of his course, "no doubt you would have been glad, many a time since these lectures commenced, if it had been in your power to exercise the same control over my jaw."

In Dr. Brown was found a "rare combination of those amiable qualities, of those virtuous and cultivated feelings of the human heart, which render character estimable in life, and serve to elevate their possessor above the rest of their fellow-beings."* Associated as these were in him with keen powers of observation, a vast fund of knowledge, a lively humor, and great conversational powers, they drew around him a large number of devoted friends and made him a welcome visitor in every social or scientific circle.

DR. JOHN P. CAMPBELL.

In 1801 Dr. John P. Campbell, of Flemingsburg, communicated to Dr. Brown the particulars of a case of "*imperforate anus*," which was published in the fifth volume of the Medical Repository. Dr. Campbell performed an operation on the child, a female, three days

* La Roche. Op. cit.

after its birth, at which time the abdomen had become much distended. He found it necessary to extend the incision three inches upward before he reached the end of the bowel. The withdrawal of his scalpel was followed by a copious discharge of meconium, and at the end of a few months the mother assured Dr. Campbell that she observed nothing in the condition of the child different from that of others which she had nursed. The operation was in every respect successful.

DR. EDWARD GAITHER.

Dr. Edward Gaither, a young physician of Springfield, reported in the *Medical Repository* for July, 1809, a remarkable case of a female child in whose body after death was found an imperfect terns. The history of this case, which forms the first article in the eleventh volume of the *Repository*, is as follows: A female child aged two years was visited by Dr. Gaither on the 7th of April, 1809, supposed to be laboring under ascites, of which she died a few hours after his arrival. The parents, when she was only a month or two old, discovered a hard body within her abdomen, which continued to increase in size. Her health became delicate when she was nine months old, and about nine months before her death she began to decline rapidly, and became emaciated. Her appetite was unimpaired to the last, and she had a longing for ardent spirits, of which she could drink large quantities without becoming intoxicated. Notwithstanding her poor health she had attained at her death the ordinary size of children of that age. Her countenance, which was intelligent, wore a settled expression of gloom and melancholy, imparting to her a peculiarly interesting appearance.

The phenomena revealed by the post mortem examination were the following: A sac was opened within the abdominal cavity which discharged between three quarts and a gallon of yellow fetid water. "Within this cavity was found a monster, or imperfect child, and also an animal substance of a whitish color. The monster weighed one pound and fourteen ounces. The substance weighed two ounces, was rather of an oval figure, and was connected to the child from which it was taken by a cord that had some faint resemblance to the umbilical." The head was imperfect, and rested upon the breast between the knees. It had neither ears, mouth, nor eyes, but on the side of the head was

a prominence which contained three teeth—one canine and two incisors—of about the size of the teeth of a child two years old. On the back part of the head was hair seven or eight inches long. The body of the monster was seven inches long and ten inches in circumference. The extremities were imperfect. On one hand it had three fingers and a thumb; the other arm was without a hand, but had a nail at the end of the stump. The bones of both thighs had protruded half an inch through the skin at the knees. From the knees to the shoulders the fetus presented considerable perfection of form. The sex was obscure, but Dr. Gaither regarded it as female.

The author of this narrative deemed it necessary to substantiate his statement by the testimony of eye-witnesses, and accordingly the certificates of John Rowan, Thomas J. Cocke, and John Calhoun are appended to his report of the case. The editors refer to several instances of a similar character related by Rzascynski, Bartholine, Schurig, and Lentin, and conclude that a *congenitum monstrum* has not unfrequently "obtruded itself, with all its embarrassing and humiliating accompaniments, upon public notice."

DR. JOSEPH BUCHANAN.

The name of Dr. Buchanan is in the list of professors appointed to chairs in the medical department of Transylvania University in 1809, and he, at least, appears to have prepared himself to discharge the duties of his chair. In 1812, after "the school had miscarried," he published an octavo volume of three hundred and thirty-six pages, entitled "The Philosophy of Human Nature," comprising a series of lectures introductory to his course. The volume was printed for the author by John A. Grimes, at Richmond, Kentucky, and presents an appearance quite agreeable to the eye, the paper, typography, and binding comparing well with books published in our great commercial centers at that day. It was not given to the world until the author had "determined to relinquish the unprofitable pursuits of literature and science for others more humble and lucrative." Nor was the success of his volume of lectures greater than that of the school in the interest of which it was composed. Not only did it fail to bring the author any pecuniary reward for his labor, but instead its doctrines brought upon him a good deal of criticism.

In his preface he announces that the authors from whom he had

borrowed most were Locke, Hartley, Hume, and Darwin. This was enough to raise a doubt as to his soundness on points of doctrine about which serious men feel the deepest concern, and the reader had not far to go before he found that the author was an advocate of materialism. "Mind," he says on the third page of his lectures, "is merely an organic state of matter, such as constitutes the human brain." And again, in his first chapter, he says, referring to the stupidity of mind that follows pressure on the brain, "This proves to me that there is no spiritual mind in man possessed of an original activity, able to feel and think within itself, or to commence thought, sentiment, and motion."

The avowal of these opinions shocked the feelings of the reading community and rendered their author unpopular. And yet when his language is examined closely it is seen that he does not deny the separate existence of mind, nor assert that mind and matter are "synonymous terms." What he insists upon is that we are unable "to acquire a direct and complete knowledge of either mind or matter, or to decide that they are radically the same or radically different." When he seems to deny the existence of a spiritual mind in man he merely asserts that there is no such mind possessed of "an original activity;" that mind owes its power of outward manifestation to the brain—a proposition which would now meet with universal acceptance. Still the expressions "mind is an organic state of matter," "a peculiar combination of material elements," "mind appears to be itself an attribute of matter," turned the public strongly against his book.

It is impossible, however, to deny that Dr. Buchanan pursues the difficult subject of his lectures in a candid and philosophical spirit, and in its discussion exhibits an acute and vigorous intellect. In following his speculations one is continually reminded of the views which have been rendered so popular by the writings of Huxley, Tyndall, Carpenter, and Herbert Spencer. The followers of these able writers indeed will be surprised to see how often their doctrines have been anticipated by Dr. Buchanan in this work. The lectures form but a fragment of a work which he meditated on the subject. If he had continued to apply himself to the study, and had completed the system of which he has here given a sketch, it would doubtless have embraced many of the principles of the current psychology of our times. Thus in the following passage how nearly are the phrases the same with those used by most of the present writers on the brain:

"Extending our observations on mind, whose existence, proximate difference from matter, and constant connection with it have been remarked, we shall perceive that the conditions of this connection with certain organic states of matter amount to an actual subordination and dependence. Those very acts and attributes of mind from which we have inferred its being can not be exercised without concurring actions in the conjoined organic substance. Perception, feeling, thought, volition have never been performed by any mind without a simultaneous corresponding operation in the brain where it resided; and the mental act in those cases which admit of a development, and probably in all others, proves to be secondary and consequential to the physical. The mind itself therefore must be subordinate and dependent—not the primary agent using the organic matter merely as a convenient instrument in its transactions."

The subjects discussed by him in the successive chapters of his work are an outline of physiology; the nature and preservation of animal life; excitability, excitement, and renovation; the different kinds of excitement and their laws; unity of excitement and the common stimulants of life; association; ideas, their associations and abstractions; sentiments; temper and temperament; belief; volition; and in an appendix additional remarks on association, and conjectures on the physiology of the brain. In every chapter there is an amount of original thought altogether remarkable, whatever may be the judgment respecting the correctness of many of the opinions. Proofs of a clear, vigorous mind are afforded by every page. Indeed "The Philosophy of Human Nature" may be pronounced a work of genius, and after all that has been written on the subject the student of physiology will read it with interest.

Dr. Joseph Buchanan was born in Washington County, Virginia, on the 24th of August, 1785. When ten years old his father removed with him to Tennessee, where he remained until 1804, when he came to Kentucky for the completion of his education. On the banks of the Cumberland, where his boyhood was passed, he experienced the hardships and privations of a frontier life, and enjoyed but few opportunities for acquiring an education. But in 1802, when seventeen years of age, he went to a grammar-school near Nashville, where in five months he gained by his facility in acquiring knowledge the reputation of a great genius. Thus early he gave proofs of remark-

able inventive powers, and devoted much time while at this school to an improvement which he thought he had discovered in the machinery of mills; but finding on a more careful examination that his plan had inenrable defects, he gave it up. In nine months, while at this school, he is said to have "mastered the Latin language." One of the points in which he especially distinguished himself was original composition. So fond was he of originality, it has been alleged, that in his essays he would never write on a subject on which he had ever read any thing.*

In 1804 his guardian and nephew, Major Edmondson, sent him to Transylvania University, where he formed the acquaintance of Dr. Blythe, Dr. Brown, and Dr. Overton, all of whom became his friends. His rustic appearance when he reached Lexington, then the seat of the most polished society in the western country, and his diffident manner, rendered more embarrassed by recent illness, made him pass at first for a simpleton; but in a little while his proficiency in mathematics raised him to the first rank in the institution. It is related of him that in studying Ferguson's Optics he detected an error of the author in regard to the focal distances of lenses, and when his professor disputed his position wrote a defense of it, and proposed to demonstrate its truth on the blackboard. The teacher, still adhering to the text of the author, absurdly refused to permit the proposed demonstration. His gifted and indefatigable pupil during the vacation went to work and published a pamphlet of twenty pages, which, if it made no reference to the dispute about the lenses, demonstrated his powers as a mathematician. In this tract he attempted to show some errors in the philosophy of Newton.

The year after entering Transylvania University he commenced the study of medicine with Dr. Samuel Brown, who held a chair in the institution. But his inventive genius continued active in the midst of his medical studies, and in the year in which he entered upon them he constructed a new musical instrument, consisting of glasses of different chemical composition. About the same time he announced a conception, not yet realized, of making music by light—the sounds to be elicited by means of "harmonific colors luminously displayed." † It was necessary to the perfection of his invention that he should study colors and the laws of vision, as well as music; in the course

* Collins's History of Kentucky.

† *Ibid.*

of which he ascertained that in his fundamental principles he had been anticipated by others, which extinguished "his hopes of immortality" from this discovery. Before abandoning it, however, he wrote an essay of eighty pages on the subject.

After reading medicine with his accomplished preceptor nearly two years he went to Port Gibson, Mississippi, and engaged in the practice, purposing so soon as he could command the means to attend a course of lectures in Philadelphia. With characteristic activity of mind he began to write as soon as he engaged in practice, and in a few months had composed a treatise of a hundred and seventy-five pages on fever. This he took to Philadelphia in the autumn of 1807, hoping with the proceeds of its publication to defray the expenses of a winter in that city. The professors must have been impressed with the self-reliance as well as the literary culture of the young backwoodsman. Rush and Barton, it is said, spoke highly of his essay; but the author failed to find a publisher, and, not having the means necessary to sustain him in the city, returned to the West in the spring after a single course of lectures in the University of Pennsylvania. He walked from Philadelphia to Lexington in twenty-seven days, reaching home, says his biographer; "empty in purse, but improved in health," which had suffered by his residence in Mississippi from an attack of remittent fever. Soon after his return to Lexington, where he determined to settle, the degree of A. B., at the instance of Dr. Blythe, was conferred upon him by Transylvania University.

Hardly had he got settled in Lexington before he conceived the idea of becoming a teacher of medicine, if indeed it was not with that view that he selected Lexington as his home. A medical department had existed for some years in the university there, but its existence was merely nominal. Several professors had been appointed in succession, but, except the short course already mentioned by Dr. Ridgely, no lectures had been delivered. Dr. Buchanan, full of zeal and self-reliance, though only twenty-four years old and not yet a graduate in medicine, engaged earnestly in the work of organizing a medical faculty. The trustees favored the project so far as to fill several chairs. He was placed in the chair of the institutes of medicine, which doubtless was his choice, and the one best suited to his taste and character of mind. Two of his colleagues were Dr. James Overton and Dr. B. W. Dudley, and it is noteworthy that of

that he had a much higher opinion of Overton, who never succeeded as a teacher, than of Dudley, who became one of the first teachers of his day. The plain, solid parts of the one were not a match, in his mind, for the showy rhetoric of the other. But the combined talents of the faculty were unavailing to secure the success of the enterprise; and as Dr. Buchanan was too much engrossed by his inventions and in preparing the lectures spoken of elsewhere to give any time or attention to getting business, he was ready at the end of two years to abandon medicine for something more lucrative. His book, of which he had a thousand copies published, was no less a failure than the school, and he renounced science and medical teaching together.

We next find him engaged, for a short time, in a strenuous effort to introduce the Pestalozzian system of education into Kentucky; but he soon grew tired of this hobby, and in the thirty-second year of his age entered upon the study of the law, which, as before in medicine, he began to teach as soon as he was prepared to practice it. While occupied with all of these diversified pursuits he was editing a political newspaper, and writing elaborate articles on various subjects relating to literature, science, and political economy. Among other topics materialism, of which his lectures caused him to hear much, came in for a share of his attention, and he wrote a review of his principles intended to show that while his former argument remained untouched, one might by a "deeper analysis arrive at a system of universal spiritualism!"

And so he labored on without rest, "wearing out his days," as he expressed it, "in hard study, without deriving much profit from it." It was while performing this unrequited labor perhaps that in one of his letters he uttered the complaint, "I was born in the slaughter-house of genius, and have struggled on the block from the fear of my nativity."

His inventive genius was active in the midst of all his studies, and he suggested a number of improvements in the steam-engine, one of which he thought, at first, from its superior lightness, might be applicable to aerial navigation! On trying the experiment, however, he found that errors had been committed by English authors, whose statements in regard to it he had accepted as correct, and had to relinquish the project of navigating the air; but about the year 1824 he applied his engine to a car, and had the satisfaction of seeing

it "run through the streets of Louisville in the presence of an astonished throng of spectators."

While delivering lectures on law, editing newspapers, and inventing new motive powers, he found time to publish an English grammar, which is said to have been valuable for its simplicity. Dr. Buchanan had no high opinion of schools or teachers. He says in one of his letters, written in his college-days, "Schools and colleges (at least such as I have seen) were only made for the dull and idle. If a youth can learn, and will do it, he has only to provide himself with good books and perhaps get some assistance in the rudiments of things." And in another he says, "A young man who has not genius and application enough to master any thing in books without the feeble assistance of a professor might as well be placed at the plow-tail at once. But a student will gain considerable advantage from attending the practice of an eminent physician. The instructions you get from a private teacher amount nearly to nothing. I never got an idea from any of my instructors."

The life of this extraordinary man closed at Louisville in 1829. In many respects, as remarked by one of his biographers, it affords an instructive moral.

With all his great powers of mind he made himself master of no profession, but wasted his life in desultory labors. He lived in continual pecuniary embarrassment, when he might easily have acquired wealth; and died comparatively indifferent to fame, when steadiness of purpose would have given him a name among the first physicians, lawyers, philosophers, or inventors of his age.

During many years Dr. Buchanan took a deep interest in politics, as a Jeffersonian Democrat, a friend of Mr. Clay, and a supporter of the Old Court party; but in the enthusiasm excited by the news of the battle of New Orleans he placed in the office-window of the Palladium, of which he was the editor, in Frankfort, when illuminating for the victory, "Gen. Jackson next President."

Dr. Lewis Rogers, in his sketch of the medical history of Kentucky, describes Dr. Buchanan as a man of a slender and flexible form, with a massive head and thoughtful, intellectual face.

DR. EPHRAIM McDOWELL.

Dr. McDowell, as has been remarked elsewhere, was one of Dr. Brown's fellow students in Edinburgh, but seems to have been less apt than his young countrymen, Hosack, Davidge, and Brown. Nevertheless he has left a name which is likely to be as durable and resounding as that of any other American physician or surgeon. He was born in Rockbridge County, Virginia, on the 11th of November, 1771. His father, Samuel McDowell, was a man of note and influence in the state, and was honored with many positions of trust. In 1783 he removed to Kentucky, settling near Danville. He was appointed judge of the District Court of Kentucky, and took part in organizing the first court ever formed in the state.

Ephraim was one of a family of twelve children. The maiden name of his mother was McClung. But little is known of his early education, and the few brief articles that he wrote after his surgical operations had rendered him famous show that in some respects it must have been neglected. On quitting school he entered upon the study of medicine with Dr. Humphreys, at Staunton, the preceptor and brother-in-law of Dr. Brown, and after reading two or three years under his direction repaired to the University of Edinburgh, of which Dr. Humphreys was a graduate. Of the teachers in Edinburgh at that period the one of greatest genius and the most attractive to McDowell was John Bell, who, though not a professor in the medical school, drew around him large private classes. McDowell was charmed with his eloquence, and is said to have conceived the thought of ovariectomy from some suggestions thrown out in his lectures.

Like his countryman Brown, McDowell probably left Edinburgh without a diploma. This supposition is rendered almost certain by the fact that the honorary degree of M.D. was conferred upon him by the University of Maryland in 1825.* Davidge, his old friend and contemporary at Edinburgh, would certainly never have entertained the thought of conferring such a degree upon a graduate of his *alma mater*. But if he did not bring home with him the highest honors of that renowned university, he came back with what was of far greater value—the anatomical and surgical knowledge to place him in the front of his profession. He returned to Kentucky in 1795, and settled at Danville

*Gross. Am. Med. Biog.

among the people who had known him from his boyhood. His success was immediate, and he maintained it by devotion to his business. In a little while nearly all the important surgical operations for hundreds of miles around were performed by him; and this continued till Dudley returned from Europe many years later to share with him the empire in surgery.*

In 1802, fully established in his profession, and with an income which rendered him independent, he married Sarah, daughter of Governor Isaac Shelby. In 1809 he performed his first operation for the removal of an ovarian tumor. The subject was Mrs. Crawford, of Green County, Kentucky, and in 1817 he wrote out for the Eclectic Repertory a short history of the operation, which he believed was without a precedent in the annals of surgery. He says in his report that he had "never seen so large a substance extracted, nor heard of an attempt or success attending any operation such as this required."

Since ovariectomy began to be repeated with so great success by other surgeons the operations of Dr. McDowell have acquired very great interest, and attempts have been made to rob him of the honor of having first performed it; but Dr. Gross, who has been at great pains to investigate the matter, declares that it is unquestionably due to him. The operation of L'Aumonier, which it was claimed had preceded McDowell's, was one merely of puncturing an abscess of the ovary, and not its extirpation. Still less claim have the operations of Dzondi and Galenzowski, referred to by Dr. Atlee, to take precedence of McDowell's. That of Dzondi was performed not on a female, but on a lad twelve years old, and the tumor consequently was not ovarian. It was drawn out from the hypogastric region through an incision in the walls of his abdomen, and after inducing mortification in it by means of long tents it was extracted piecemeal with a pair of broad forceps. In 1816, six years after McDowell operated, Dzondi related other examples of cure in the same way, and expressed the opinion that in certain favorable circumstances a similar operation might be performed in ovarian dropsy.

The operation of Galenzowski was performed eighteen years after

* Dr. Gross, in his memoir of McDowell, says that Dr. Brashear, of Bardstown, performed the first successful amputation at the hip-joint in the United States, early in the present century. He would have proved doubtless a formidable rival of the great ovariectomist had he not soon after this achievement, and while still a young man, given up his profession for a plantation in Louisiana.

McDowell's first case of ovariectomy, and besides was not an extirpation of the ovary. The tumor in his case was large, multilocular, and so firmly attached to the posterior wall of the abdomen as to render its extraction impossible.* The surgeon therefore made a large incision into its cavity, tore up its cells with his fingers, evacuated the contents, and fastened the sac to the external wound by a ligature. Portions of the sac came away at intervals, and on the seventieth day the patient was discharged, having only a small fistule in the hypogastric region.†

Mr. Spencer Wells, it appears, is still disposed to claim for Great Britain the honor of this operation. According to Dr. Atlee, he insists that ovariectomy was performed near Glasgow, in 1791, by Dr. Robert Houston, and that consequently the operation originated with British surgery on British ground. But on examination this case turns out to have been nothing more than an incision into a diseased ovary and the evacuation of a large quantity of gelatinous fluid.‡

From all the evidence on the subject there can not be a doubt that the credit of introducing ovariectomy belongs to Dr. McDowell. But his priority in the operation was not the only point which has been in dispute respecting it. Dr. McDowell seems to have kept no notes of his cases. He was reluctant to publish a history of his operations, and when induced at last to draw up the meager account which was sent to the Eclectic Repertory he was obliged to rely upon "his ledger for his dates and his memory for the facts." It appeared an improbable story as it was carried abroad. Surgeons generally hesitated to accredit its truth. The quarter from which it proceeded was well calculated to create doubts as to its authenticity. The style in which it was related tended in no degree to allay incredulity. Dr. McDowell was not a clear, much less a scholarly, writer. His history was confused, if not contradictory. He spoke of his first patient as having come to his house to undergo the operation, and then of his visiting her a few days afterward. The critics, already inclined to disbelief, seized upon these apparent discrepancies to cast doubt upon the narrative. The comments of Dr. James Johnson, of the *Medico-Chirurgical Review*, expressed what no doubt was in the minds of most foreign readers, as well as of many readers at home, on the subject.

* Gross. Am. Med. Biog.

† *Ibid.*

‡ Jackson. Memoir of McDowell.

Dr. Johnson says, "Three cases of ovarian extirpation occurred, it would seem, some years ago in the practice of Dr. McDowell, of Kentucky, which were transmitted to the late John Bell, and fell into the hands of Mr. Lizars. We candidly confess that we are rather skeptical respecting these statements, and we are rather surprised that Mr. Lizars himself should put implicit credence in them. A woman, supposed to be parturient, was visited by Dr. McDowell, at the instigation of two physicians who considered her in the last stage of pregnancy. Dr. M. found the uterus unimpregnated, but a large tumor in the abdomen, movable from side to side. The woman traveled sixty miles on horseback to have an operation performed. Dr. Mac made an incision, nine inches in length, parallel with the rectus abdominis, and right into the abdominal cavity. The tumor appeared in view, but could not be removed. A ligature was thrown round the Fallopian tube, the tumor cut open (found to be the ovaria), and fifteen pints of dirty, gelatinous stuff extracted; 'after which he cut through the Fallopian tube and extracted the sac, which weighed seven pounds and a half.' As soon as the external opening was made the intestines rushed out upon the table, and they could not be replaced till after the operation was performed, which lasted twenty-five minutes! The wound was sewn up by means of the interrupted suture, assisted by means of adhesive plaster. Dr. Mac visited the patient *at the end of five days*, though she had come to his own residence to have the operation performed!! He found her engaged in making her bed! She soon returned to her native place quite well. *Credat Judeus, non ego.*"

And no wonder; the story was so strange that not a few of our own physicians treated it as apocryphal.

Dr. Johnson goes on further to say, "The second case is little less extraordinary, if not incredible. A negress had a hard, fixed, painful tumor in the abdomen. Dr. Mac placed her on a table, laid the abdomen open, inserted his hand, and found the ovarium very much enlarged, painful to the touch, and firmly adhering to the bladder and fundus uteri. 'To extract *this*' (two ovaria), he thought, 'would be instantly fatal;' 'but by way of *experiment*,' says the doctor, 'I plunged the scalpel into the diseased part, when some gelatinous substance, as in the above case, with a profusion of blood, rushed to the external opening, which I conveyed off by placing my hand under

the tumor, suffering the discharge to run over it.' A quart or more of blood escaped into the abdomen. The same dressings and the same success as in the first case. We can not bring ourselves to credit this statement."

Such incredulity, so bluntly expressed, had one happy effect—it compelled Dr. McDowell, in defense of his character for integrity as well as of his professional reputation, to report other cases of ovariectomy which he had performed, with fuller and more satisfactory details; and the editor of the *Medico-Chirurgical Review*, with true manliness, made honorable amends to the backwoods surgeon in the following terms: "A back settlement of America—Kentucky—has beaten the mother country, nay, Europe itself, with all the boasted surgeons thereof, in the fearful and formidable operation of gastrotomy with extraction of diseased ovaria. In the second volume of this series, page 216, we adverted to the cases of Dr. McDowell, of Kentucky, published by Mr. Lizars, of Edinburgh, and expressed ourselves as skeptical respecting their authenticity. Dr. Coates, however, has now given us much more cause for wonder at the success of Dr. McDowell; for it appears that out of five cases operated on in Kentucky by Dr. McDowell four recovered after the extraction and only one died. There were circumstances in the narratives of some of the first three cases that raised misgivings in our minds, for which uncharitableness we ask pardon of God and of Dr. McDowell, of Danville. The two additional cases now republished (for it appears that the cases were published, though in a very unsatisfactory form, in the *American Eclectic Repertory*) are equally wonderful as those with which our readers are already acquainted."*

Dr. Johnson has this concluding paragraph on the subject, which shows how hard it was for the editor to do full justice to the skill of the American surgeon; "When we come to reflect," he says, "that all the women operated on in Kentucky, except one, were *negresses*, and that these people will bear cutting with nearly if not quite as much impunity as dogs or rabbits, our wonder is rather lessened, and so is our hope of rivaling Dr. McDowell on this side of the Atlantic."

Dr. Lewis Rogers says, speaking of the claims of Dr. McDowell to having originated this operation, "In a conversation which I had, in 1865, with a number of eminent surgeons of Great Britain, among

* *Med. Chi. Rev.*, Oct. 1826.

whom may be mentioned Mr. Spencer Wells, Mr. Baker Brown, and Sir James Syme, no one had any reserve on the subject except Mr. Syme. While he did not deny the claim of Dr. McDowell, he did not admit it." But he adds that "in a recent article in the *Edinburgh Review* on the progress of medicine and surgery the operation of ovariectomy is fully discussed without the mention of Dr. McDowell. Mr. Spencer Wells is made the hero of the operation."*

Dr. McDowell is known to have operated for diseased ovaria thirteen times, and six out of seven of his first cases terminated favorably. How large a proportion of the subsequent operations was successful there are now no means of determining. Dr. J. D. Jackson states, in his valuable memoir of Dr. McDowell, that two resulted favorably, making eight recoveries in all.

Dr. McDowell experienced much more than the ordinary trouble of discoverers in establishing his claims to the respect of men on account of ovariectomy. To what has already been related is to be added the statement, which at one time was current, that his first operation was actually performed not by himself, but by his nephew, Dr. James McDowell. This induced Dr. M. to address a card to the profession, in 1826, in which he declares that his nephew, who was also his partner in business, attempted to dissuade him from the operation, and that he only consented on the morning on which it took place to be present and assist in it. He then goes on to say that having himself marked with a pen the course of the incision to be made, his nephew executed it in part; but that he then took the knife and completed the operation, as reported in the *Eclectic Repertory*. Finally he adds, with great modesty, that he was inclined to attribute the success of the operation more to accident than to his skill or judgment; but that, having repeated it twice again with success, he deemed it due to his own reputation and to suffering humanity to announce the result to the profession. The following is the history of his first case, which will remain ever memorable in the annals of surgery:

"In December, 1809, I was called to see a Mrs. Crawford, who had for several months thought herself pregnant. She was affected with pain similar to labor-pains, for which she could find no relief. So strong was the presumption of her being in the last stage of pregnancy that two physicians who were consulted in her case requested my aid

* Trans. Ky. Med. Soc. 1873.

in delivering her. The abdomen was considerably enlarged, and had the appearance of pregnancy, though the inclination of the tumor was to one side, admitting of an easy removal to the other. Upon examination *per vaginam* I found nothing in the uterus which induced the conclusion that it must be an enlarged ovarium. Having never seen so large a substance extracted, nor heard of an attempt or success attending any operation such as this required, I gave to the unhappy woman information of her dangerous situation. She appeared willing to undergo an experiment which I promised to perform if she would come to Danville (the town where I live), a distance of sixty miles from her place of residence. This appeared almost impracticable by any though the most favorable conveyance, though she performed the journey in a few days on horseback. With the assistance of my nephew and colleague, James McDowell, M. D., I commenced the operation, which was concluded as follows: Having placed her on a table of the ordinary height, on her back, and removed all her dressing which might in any way impede the operation, I made an incision about three inches long, from the musculus rectus abdominis, on the left side, continuing the same nine inches in length, parallel with the fibers of the above-named muscle, extending into the cavity of the abdomen, the parietes of which were a good deal contused, which we ascribed to the resting of the tumor on the horn of the saddle during the journey. The tumor then appeared in full view, but was so large that we could not take it away entire. We put a strong ligature around the Fallopian tube near to the uterus; we then cut open the tumor, which was the ovarium and the fimbriated part of the Fallopian tube very much enlarged. We took out fifteen pounds of a dirty, gelatinous-looking substance; after which we cut through the Fallopian and extracted the sac, which weighed seven pounds and a half. As soon as the external opening was made the intestines rushed out upon the table, and so completely was the abdomen filled by the tumor that they could not be replaced during the operation, which was terminated in about twenty-five minutes. We then turned her upon her left side, so as to permit the blood to escape, after which we closed the external opening with the interrupted suture, leaving out at the lower end of the incision the ligature which surrounded the Fallopian tube. Between every two stitches we put a strip of adhesive plaster, which by keeping the parts in contact hastened the healing of the incision. We then

applied the usual dressing, put her to bed, and prescribed a strict observance of the antiphlogistic regime. In five days I visited her, and much to my astonishment found her engaged in making up her bed. I gave her particular caution for the future, and in twenty-five days she returned home, as she came, in good health, which she continues to enjoy.”*

It is upon these operations that the fame of Dr. McDowell as a surgeon will chiefly rest; but his skill was exhibited equally in other capital operations. He acquired at an early day distinction as a lithotomist, which brought to him patients from other states. One of these was James K. Polk, of Tennessee, afterward President of the United States, who submitted to the operation in the autumn of 1812. The result was happy, and I remember hearing a letter, from the patient to the surgeon, read by Dr. Gross to the Kentucky Medical Society in 1852, abounding in expressions of the warmest gratitude for the relief afforded by it. During his life he performed lithotomy thirty-two times without the loss of a patient.† He operated always by the lateral method, and used the gorget for many years in opening the bladder; but at a later period he employed the knife instead.

In 1828 Dr. McDowell became a member of the Episcopal Church at Danville, in the communion of which he died on the 25th of June, 1830. His remains were interred in the family burying-ground of his father-in-law, Governor Shelby, and marking the spot where they repose is a plain marble slab, with the simple inscription of his name, “Ephraim McDowell.”

In personal appearance, as well as in manners, Dr. McDowell was prepossessing. He was nearly six feet high, a little inclined to corpulency, of a florid complexion, with dark-black eyes. In temper he was genial and cheerful, kind-hearted and generous. He had a taste for music, especially comic pieces, which he sang with fine effect, accompanying his voice sometimes with the violin. In society he was unassuming, frank, affable, and natural. His temperament inclined him to action rather than to study, though he had many books and was all his life a reader of medicine. Engaged during many years in a practice which included ovariectomy among its results, he has left no record of his varied experience except the two short papers in the *Philadelphia Eclectic Repertory*.‡

* *Eclectic Repertory*, vol. 7, p. 242.

† Gross. *Am. Med. Biog.*

‡ Vol. 7, p. 242; vol. 9, p. 546.

DR. HENRY MCMURTRIE.

On the fourth day of February, 1819, Henry McMurtrie, M. D., deposited in the office of the District of Kentucky the title of a book in the following words: "Sketches of Louisville and its environs, including, among a great variety of miscellaneous matter, a *Florula Louisvillensis*; or a catalogue of nearly four hundred genera and six hundred species of plants that grow in the vicinity of the town; to which is added an appendix containing an accurate account of the earthquakes experienced here from the 16th of December, 1811, to the 7th of February, 1812."

The book with this long title is a small octavo volume of two hundred and fifty-three pages, and was printed in Louisville, by S. Penn, jr., in July, 1819. In his preface the author says his sketches "were written under the pressure of sickness and in the presence of other powers equally tremendous." He meditated in the beginning a much more elaborate work, but was arrested in its preparation by the untoward causes alluded to. His friends urged him to arrange the few notes he had taken, and this small volume of sketches is the result. It will be referred to with interest by the curious, and will perpetuate the author's name with Louisville as the writer of her first history.

Among the points which Dr. McMurtrie hoped to establish by meteorological observations was the mild climate of the Ohio Valley as compared with that of parallel latitudes east of the mountains—an opinion which had been previously advanced by Volney and other travelers, but which the thermometer has effectually overthrown. The migration of paroquets up the Ohio and the Mississippi so far north, which was regarded by Dr. McMurtrie as evidence of this superior mildness of climate, is known to have reference to the food of those birds. It is now well understood that they make these long northern journeys not on account of the mild winters, but in search of the cockle-burr, their favorite article of diet, which abounds along these rivers.

Dr. McMurtrie's description of the organic remains at the Falls of the Ohio can not be commended for its scientific accuracy; but it evinces a taste for natural history not very common in the profession at that day. Geologists will smile when they read of creatures of existing races being found petrified in these ancient rocks. Dr. M.

himself was at first skeptical about the petrification of a buffalo's horn and head. He says that "he was for many months very dubious how to consider a fossil, resembling a horn of the above-mentioned animal, which he had found in one of the streets of Jeffersonville, until he met with a citizen who told him that he had some time before taken out from between the first and second strata of rock in the Falls the entire skull of a buffalo, with one perfect horn fixed in it!"

In a block of limestone Dr. McMurtrie fancied that he had detected "a piece of the skin of a shark;" at another point he found what he took to be young cocoa-nuts petrified; and he enumerates ammonites and oysters, the "*Bufo rana*," or toad, and the "*Rana pipiens*," or spring frog, as among the fossils imbedded in these ancient formations! The head and neck of a snapping-turtle, he says, was brought to him "petrified, and so perfect as to leave not the shadow of a doubt respecting its nature!" Not less wonderful is his account of some mastodon bones obtained near Louisville. In the cavity of one of these, he was assured, a fatty matter was found when broken open, with which a Mr. Speed, who was present, "positively greased his shoes!" He had information from explorers of a large body of coal between Louisville and Cincinnati, and of another on Silver Creek, which he supposed would soon come into general use as fuel, but which have never yet come to light.

But if, in all matters relating to geology, Dr. McMurtrie was overcredulous, he writes with great intelligence about disease. He was impressed as early as 1819 with the danger to which Louisville was exposed from pestilential fevers, owing to the masses of decaying organic matter in its streets and suburbs. He looked upon the irruption of yellow fever as imminent. During the months of July, August, and September, he says, "so strongly are the inhabitants predisposed to this disease, by the joint influences of climate and the miasm of marshes and decayed and decaying vegetable and animal matter, that they may be compared to piles of combustibles which need but the application of a single spark to rouse them into flame. Let me not be accused of alarming people unnecessarily," he adds, "for I write this under a solemn conviction of my own mind that unless greater attention be paid to cleanliness in every possible way Louisville can not long escape a signal visitation from this destroying angel."

Yellow fever never came as an epidemic, but a few years later the town was visited by outbreaks of a bilious fever almost as fatal, of which the history will be given hereafter. Dr. McMurtrie had seen cases of this fever so malignant that, in his judgment, it might without impropriety have been styled yellow fever.

He states the interesting fact that at the time when he wrote the children dying in Louisville to the adults were in the proportion of two to one. This fearful infant mortality was attributed to worms and cholera infantum. Small-pox was the most fatal disease of adults at that time.

In this connection Dr. McMurtrie makes a warm appeal to the authorities of Louisville in behalf of a hospital. Not a hut or shelter of any kind was then afforded by the town for the homeless victims of disease. The sick poor were cast upon the charity of the citizens, and of these the boats brought numbers to the town in addition to those prostrated by its malarial fever. His appeal met with a liberal response not a great while afterward in the shape of the Marine Hospital.

As to "seasoning," as it is termed, Dr. McMurtrie remarks correctly that "the idea is futile." A severe attack of fever, so far from affording an immigrant any immunity against a second attack, rather predisposes him to it.

To affirm that Louisville is a healthy city, he admits, would have been absurd at that day; but he insists that it was much more so than "the thousand tongues of fame" would have made it; and as the causes of sickness were such as might be removed, he was confident that the day was coming when it would cease to be looked upon as "the grave-yard of the western country."

When Dr. McMurtrie wrote his sketches Louisville had no paupers. He says, "I have never yet seen in the streets of Louisville what is properly denominated a beggar." The town at that time had a neat market-house, kept in good order, "and well supplied, two days in the week," with every thing that could be desired in a similar place.

The account given by Dr. McMurtrie of the earthquakes of 1811 and 1812 is full and graphic, and adds much to the interest of his sketches. In thirteen weeks the number of shocks felt in Louisville was eighteen hundred and seventy-four, those of the greatest severity having occurred on the 22d of December, 1811, and the 9th of February

following. Most were so slight as not to be noticed by the careless observer; but some were of such violence as to threaten the destruction of the town. He records eight of these, felt in December, January, and February. In the little time they continued buildings oscillated largely, grinding against each other, the walls splitting and beginning to yield, chimneys, parapets, and gable-ends breaking in various directions and toppling to the ground. There were ten of the second rate of violence, but severe enough to excite alarm. Of the third rate there were thirty-five, which, though moderate, "alarmed people generally." Even those of the sixth rate, which amounted to sixteen hundred and sixty-seven, caused "a strange sort of sensation, amounting sometimes to giddiness," though they were so slight as only to be perceived by the vibration of bodies around.

Dr. McMurtrie hints at some foibles which characterized the society of Louisville in his day. The great body of the people, he complains, "were absorbed in the business of adding dollar to dollar." To know how to make money appeared to him to be the grand object of the citizens. If a boy knows that, he said, the people think he knows every thing that needs to be learned. All else they deemed superfluous, and he adds, somewhat cynically, "that were the arts and sciences to appear in the streets in the persons of Phidias or Aristotle, Canova or Newton, clothed in the garb of poverty, they would be jostled into the kennel." But while such were the people of Louisville generally sixty years ago, there was, he said, "a small circle within whose magic round abounded every pleasure that wealth, regulated by taste, could produce or urbanity bestow."

From these and other expressions in his work it is plain that the life of Dr. McMurtrie had not been prosperous. The tone in which he writes is that of a disappointed man. He is described by those who knew him toward the close of his life as "a man of an ungainly, neglected appearance." His devotion to science and letters was not appreciated, and instead of the complete history of Louisville which he had hoped to prepare, sickness and other misfortunes compelled him to content himself with a volume made up, as he expressed it himself, "of shreds and patches." Nevertheless it was dedicated to His Excellency, James Monroe, President of the United States, and will outlive many a work of higher pretensions.